

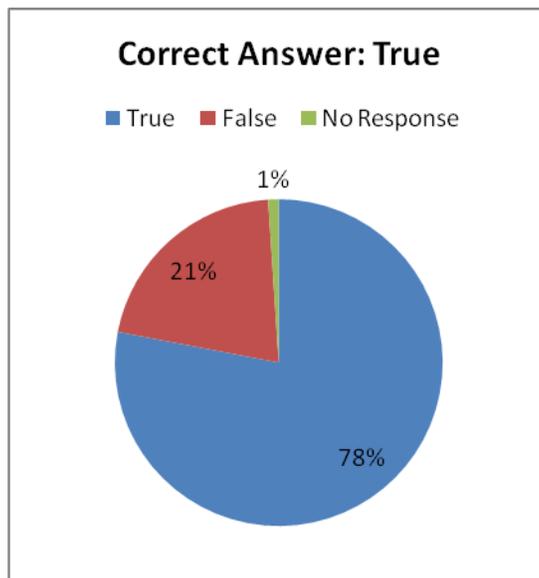
## HIC February 2011 Survey Questions, Answers & Responses

The Patrick-Murray Administration's Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation surveyed homeowners and contractors to gauge their knowledge of Home Improvement Contractor rules and regulations. Below are the results of that survey. The graphic includes responses from both contractors and homeowners.

Q1: Are you a home improvement contractor or a homeowner?

A1:	Contractor	Homeowner	Total Respondents
	89	102	191

Q2: Massachusetts requires home improvement contractors to obtain certificates of registration before contracting with a homeowner.

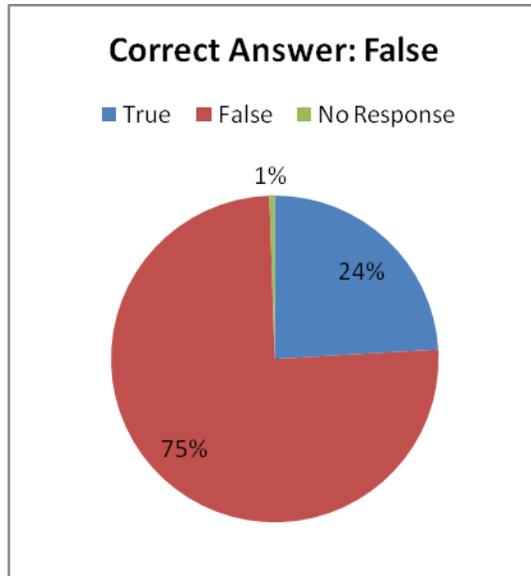


**91 percent of Contractors  
got this answer right.**

**67 percent of Homeowners  
got this answer right.**

A2: **True.** Contractors may also be required to have a Construction Supervisor's License (CSL). In order to perform almost any home repair or structural work, you need a construction supervisor to oversee the project. However, certain professions, such as plumbers, electricians or HVAC experts, require that they be licensed by other state agencies.

Q3: If the project will cost less than \$1,500 the contract can be verbal.



**81 percent of Contractors  
got this answer right.**

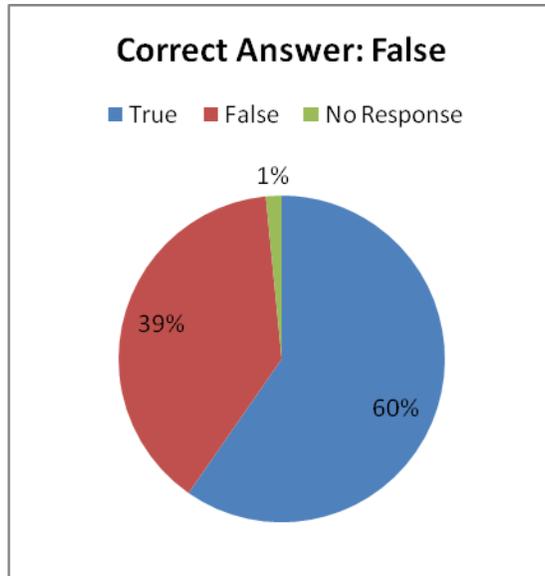
**70 percent of Homeowners  
got this answer right.**

**A3: False.** *The law requires all contracts over \$1,000 to be written and signed. Also, while not required it is a good idea no matter what the cost of a project to always have a written and signed contract. A contract over \$1,000 must include the following items:*

- 1) *The identification of the contractor, including HIC registration number*
- 2) *Total price of the work including finance charges and a payment schedule*
- 3) *Provision for changes or "extras"*
- 4) *Detailed list of specifications/materials*
- 5) *Start and completion dates*
- 6) *Copy of the contractor's insurance*
- 7) *The contractor's phone numbers and home address, not just a P.O. Box*
- 8) *Permit notice warning - if you secure your own building permit or deal with unregistered contractors, you will not be eligible for the Guaranty Fund*
- 9) *3-day cancellation notice, informing you of your right to cancel the contract if the homeowner signed the contract in your home*
- 10) *Any other details particular to your job.*

*There is an example of what your contract should look like at: [www.mass.gov/homeimprovement](http://www.mass.gov/homeimprovement) and click on Required Contract Terms.*

**Q4:** A written contract is allowed to contain a provision requiring the homeowner to obtain the building permits.

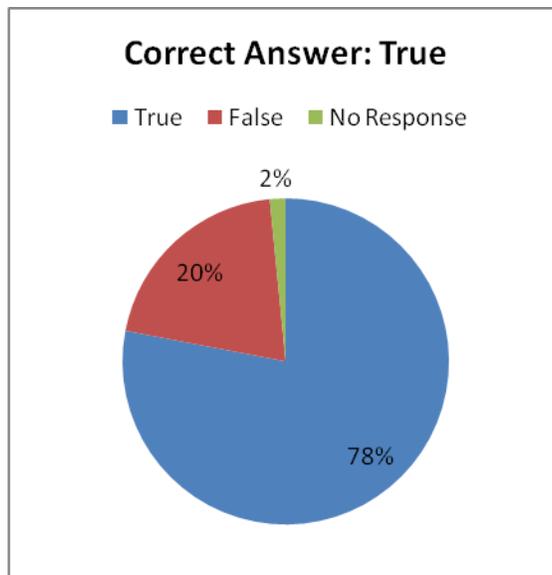


**38 percent of Contractors got this answer right.**

**39 percent of Homeowners got this answer right.**

*A4: **False.** The contractor must include a clause in the contract informing homeowners that if they obtain their own permits they will be excluded from the Guaranty Fund.*

Q5: Home improvement contractors must include their registration number on all advertising and contracts.

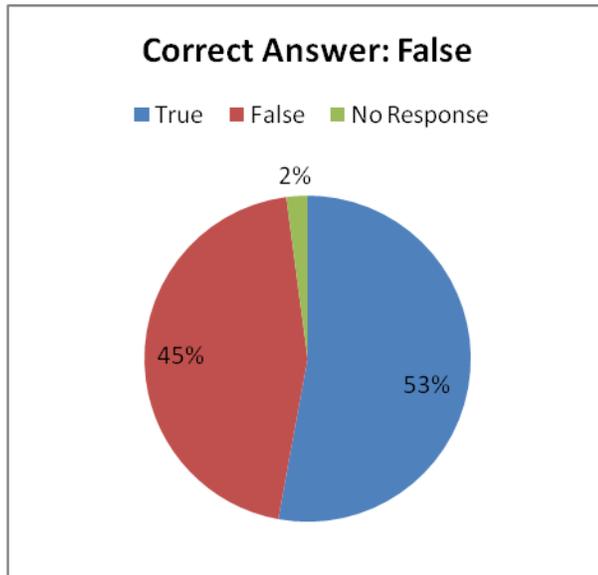


**80 percent of Contractors got this answer right.**

**76 percent of Homeowners got this answer right.**

*A5: **True.** Contractors must include their number on all advertising, including the side of their business truck, yellow pages advertising, Craig or Angie's List advertising, etc. Homeowners should check the registration number of a contractor before hiring them. They may do so by going to [www.mass.gov/homeimprovement](http://www.mass.gov/homeimprovement).*

Q6: A contractor can require 50 percent of the contract price as a deposit before starting work on a project.

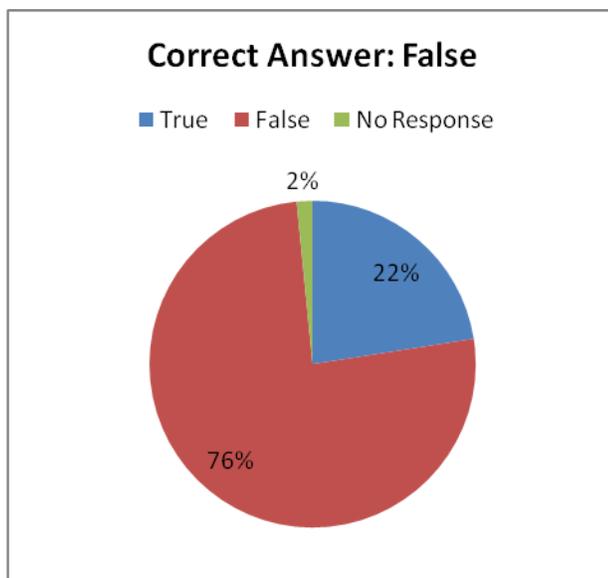


**47 percent of Contractors got this answer right.**

**43 percent of Homeowners got this answer right.**

A6: **False.** Deposits that are required to be paid in advance of commencement of work may not exceed one-third of the total contract price unless any of the materials or equipment are special order or custom made and must be ordered in advance of the commencement of work.

Q7: The earliest a home improvement contractor can request final payment is 10 days before the work is complete.

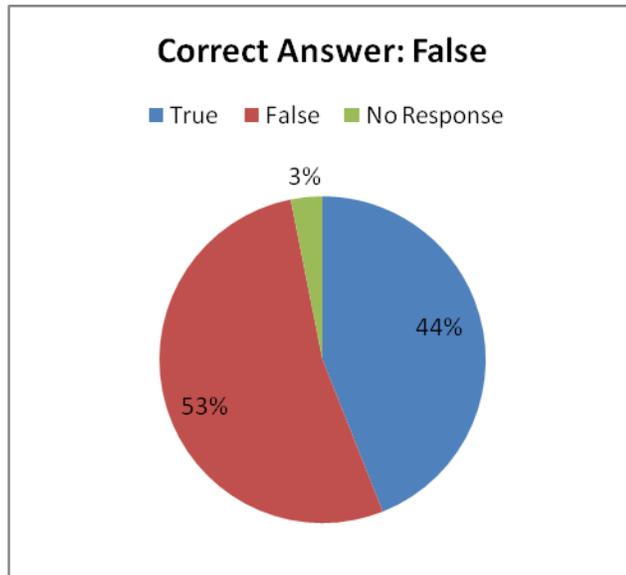


**78 percent of Contractors got this answer right.**

**74 percent of Homeowners got this answer right.**

A7: **False.** No final payment can be demanded until the contract is completed to the satisfaction of the parties.

Q8: The Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation oversees a fund that may reimburse homeowners for their actual losses up to \$10,000, if they occurred while working with any contractor, registered or unregistered.

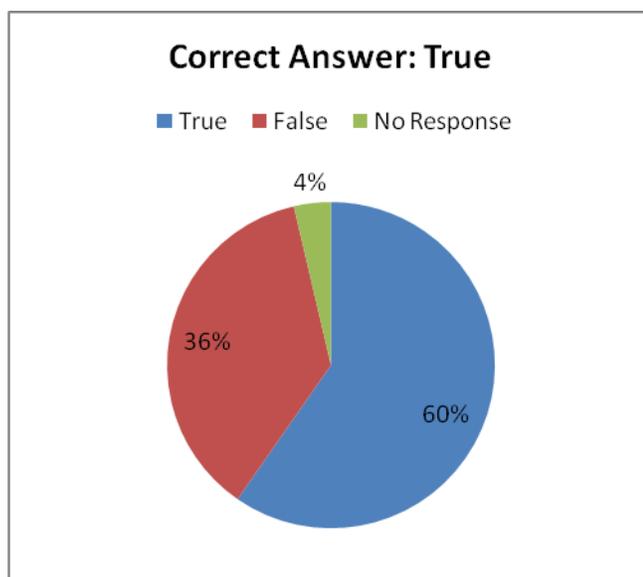


**54 percent of Contractors got this answer right.**

**52 percent of Homeowners got this answer right.**

*A8: **False.** In order for a homeowner to gain access to the Guaranty Fund, the contractor must be registered with the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation.*

Q9: If a homeowner enters into a home improvement contract at a place other than the contractor's main office, the homeowner has the right to cancel that contract within 3 business days.

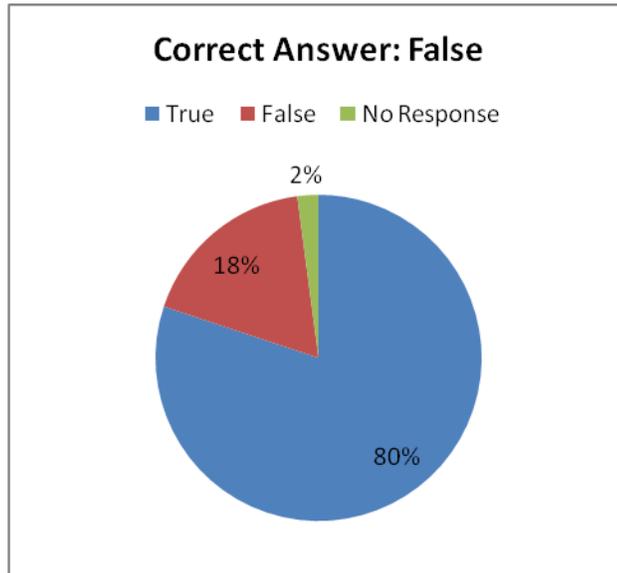


**62 percent of Contractors got this answer right.**

**58 percent of Homeowners got this answer right.**

A9: **True.** The contractor must notify the homeowner of this right in the text of all written contracts in excess of \$1,000.

Q10: A home improvement contractor is required by law to provide written invoices each time he or she bills a homeowner.

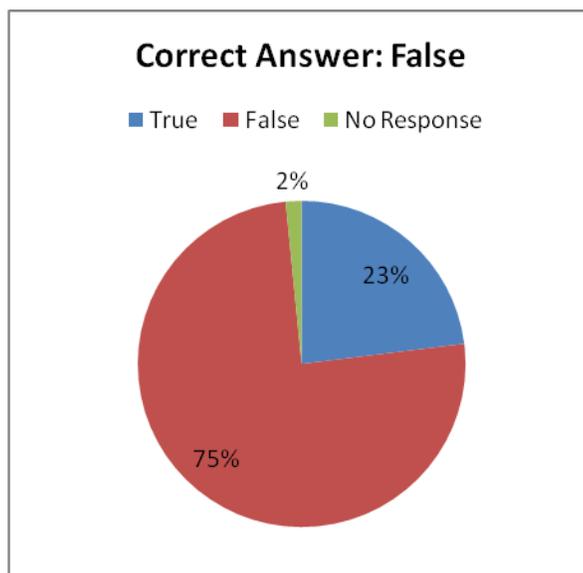


**17 percent of Contractors got this answer right.**

**19 percent of Homeowners got this answer right.**

A10: **False.** Although the written contract must include a schedule of payments, the contractor is not required by law to give a written invoice each time he or she requests payment.

Q11: If a homeowner hires a contractor to perform only landscaping, the contractor is required to be registered as a home improvement contractor.



**69 percent of Contractors got this answer right.**

**81 percent of Homeowners got this answer right.**

*All: **False.** Some work such as interior painting, landscaping, floor finishings such as tile, carpet or wood, awnings, above ground pools, fences, and driveways do not require the contractor to be registered.*